

~~TOP SECRET~~

22 January 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR POLICY COORDINATION

VIA:

O/SR

SUBJECT: Measures taken as a result of the security violation by the Captain of BIRLEND cover vessel.

REFERENCE:

T. S. Memo from O/SR, OPREP/4, ser 0006/51, dated 15 Jan 51, enclosing copy of DIO 610 Secret War course, dated 9 Jan 51.

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCES-METHOD EXEMPTION 3828
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

SECRET

100-158-81

JRS

APR 1951

1. Immediately following receipt of the referenced indication that the Captain of the BIRLEND cover vessel was the party guilty of the serious breach of security which resulted in O/SR becoming aware of government connection with this vessel, the following steps were taken. In view of the fact that at the time the referenced report was received the vessel had left U. S. territorial waters and was enroute to Europe, it was decided that the proper course of action to follow was to permit Captain Holmes to remain on board until the vessel had completed its crossing and touched its first port in the Mediterranean area. At that point Holmes will be relieved and returned to this country for whatever action is deemed necessary. The only other alternative would have been to direct the vessel to reverse its course and return to this country. A considerable delay in this vital project would have been encountered while a replacement captain was recruited and cleared.
2. It is important to stress that Captain Holmes was given a thorough and adequate briefing and was fully aware of his security responsibilities. O/SR's treatment of Captain Holmes was quite out of the routine, for his position was naturally one of great responsibility and authority. Consequently, on several specific occasions the importance and secrecy of this mission was pointed out to Holmes and the security aspects were repeatedly emphasized. At the final security briefing, which was given by [redacted], Staff IV/SA/CS, in the Potomac Hotel in Washington on 13 December, Captain Holmes stated on behalf of the crew that all concerned were cognizant of the extreme importance and sensitivity of this project and that this organization could count on them for 100% support. In addition to this statement and his signed secrecy agreement, Captain Holmes also acknowledged the importance of security and gave wholehearted support to every aspect of the operation on two other known occasions. Everything in his record points to his familiarity with security requirements. His war-time service included duty on several missions of a highly classified nature.

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 2 -

3. Holmes' speculations on the objectives of the mission give further evidence to the fact that his briefing was limited to the "need to know" basis and did not include such operational material. He did not have knowledge of the target area nor was he actually aware of the exact nature of the specialized equipment on board. He was advised of the existence of certain arms on board, since in his position as Captain, he was entitled to this knowledge.

4. At the present, several courses of action are being followed in replacing Captain Holmes. EE-1 is having the owner carefully survey the yachting trade to locate another properly qualified Captain. In addition, EE-1 is requesting the Naval Support Officer to request the Navy to provide a junior officer with small boat experience as a replacement. Also, it is possible that the navigator on board will be competent to command the ship. The senior OPC representative has been instructed to examine this possibility. As soon as a satisfactory replacement is obtained, he will be flown to the Mediterranean area to assume immediate command.

[] _____ []
Chief, EE-1

cc: ADPC - orig. and 1 (#1 and #2)
III/RE - #3 and #4
EE-1 - #5 and #6

EE-1/WPjr/bjm

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~5428~~
COPY 5 OF 5 Copies